

## Editors Column

## Bringing Back Downtown Portland



Hannah Kim  
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Gingerbread houses my friends and I made to get in the holiday season while waiting for the Woodsy Winter Village to open. [Source: Author, Hannah Kim]

When you can see people in your neighborhood or town start putting up lights and Christmas trees, and hear the soft jingles of holiday music, you know that Christmas is coming. Personally, this is my absolute favorite time of year as I love to bake Christmas cookies, go see the zoo lights, make gingerbread houses, and watch Christmas movies. There are so many fun activities and excitement that surround the holiday season. However, while this time of year is something that I look forward

to, other people may not feel the same. The holiday season might mean something else to others, a season of shortcomings.

This year, Portland is opening an outdoor skating rink in the downtown area called 'Woodsy Winter Village' with the intent to help bring in more people. Located between Harvey Milk Street and Morrison Street, the outdoor skating rink will be under a big tent, large enough to fit 120 skaters, and the 'Woodsy Winter Village'

will be set up right next to it. This village will include many holiday pop-up shops and offer food and drinks such as hot chocolate. The rink and the village will be open from December 16th through January 28th from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and tickets will be \$20 per adult and \$12 per child, with skate rentals included in the price.

Downtown Portland is known as a dangerous area, therefore, it is not very busy as people tend to avoid this area. As there have been riots and robberies that have frequently occurred in the past, the reputation of the downtown area has been hard to get rid of. Therefore, a change was needed. Downtown Portland is definitely not the best place to own a small business, as they may not receive many customers, especially during the holiday season when people tend to go shopping at malls in better areas. But the hope is that

the rink and village will attract people from all over Portland, no matter what race, gender, or income level they are. This can help Portland become more unified and amplify the holiday spirit by all gathering together. The mayor and other city leaders hope that this village and rink will be the start of a long tradition that occurs in Portland.

I am so excited for this rink and village to open, as I have already made plans to go. I can already imagine myself on the skating rink and going to the market to look around at all the holiday pop-up shops while drinking hot chocolate. This village and rink will not only make the holiday season feel more jolly but also bring Portland together as a whole. As we do not have an outdoor skating rink in Portland, this will definitely be a great addition to what the city offers during the holiday season.

## Student Reporter

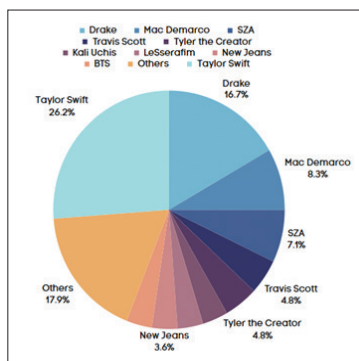
## End of the Year Wrapped



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North Hollywood High School

Music is one of the most important forms of art, both psychologically and socially. I love music. So much so that I listen to hours of music every day. I listen to music when I'm at school, when I do my homework, when I practice sports, and when I'm just chilling in my room. My mom always gets mad at me for listening to music because she feels it's a distraction. However, studies have shown that music reduces stress, anxiety, and pain and improves sleep, memory, focus, and mood. Music is also a way to bring different people and cultures together.

I remember my mom telling me that cassette tapes and walkmans were the way she listened to music when she was younger, probably in the 80s. She talked about how it was a hassle to get the music ready before being able to listen to it. In the modern world, that is not a problem. Since the release of YouTube, music streaming has been available. One of the most popular streaming services today is Spotify.



The top genres of Spotify Wrapped according to the conducted survey targeting high school students.

[Source: Author, Eunice Minji Choi]

Through this app, consumers can download music, create playlists, and even start a "jam" where they can listen to music with friends. Yes, there are other services like Amazon Music and YouTube Music that offer the same features, but there is one feature that sets Spotify apart from others: Spotify Wrapped.

On November 30, the feature all Spotify users have been waiting for arrived- Spotify Wrapped. Spotify Wrapped is a feature that has

come out annually since 2016. It is essentially a summary of the user's music history. It features top artists, genres, and tracks, how much time you've spent listening to music, how many genres you've discovered, and more. The theme is different every year, and according to the theme, there is a fun analysis of your music preferences. Spotify also released its own Wrapped, with the top 10 artists of 2023 being Taylor Swift, Bad Bunny, The Weeknd, Drake, Peso Pluma, Feid, Travis Scott, SZA, KAROL G, and Lana Del Rey, in that order.

My Spotify Wrapped was unexpected. My top artists were Taylor Swift, Novo Amor, and Jannabi. I didn't expect Taylor Swift to be my top artist because I did not listen to her often, but it seems like I must've been in a "Swiftie Era" phase during the beginning of the year. My top genres were pop, pov: indie, and rap- this seems right. I listened to 83 genres, 2,736 songs, and 1,365 artists. I spent about

60,000 minutes listening to music, but I expected a lot more, considering I listened to music every day for hours.

There are more than 11 million artists, more than 100 million songs, and at least 6,000 genres on Spotify. I conducted a survey to see who was the most popular artist and what was the most popular genre overall among high school students. The top artists were Taylor Swift, Drake, and Mac Demarco. For genres, pop came in first, k-pop and pov: indie tied for second, and rap was third. This was not a surprise, and though everyone can have different music tastes, I think this sums up the music preferences of most high school students.

Personally, this year's Spotify Wrapped didn't seem exactly accurate, but I trust Spotify. My goal for next year is to discover more artists and genres. I can't believe this year is about to end, and I can't wait for the next Spotify Wrapped to come out.

## Student Reporter

## Liminal Spaces: An Expansive Internet Project



Audrey Park  
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Northwood High School

Some individuals find empty or abandoned spaces to be eerie; when those dilapidated locations evoke a sense of familiarity or nostalgia, one is likely to feel uncomfortable. In today's era, many online forums interested in indie projects will attach the fear gotten from these unusually nostalgic locations to "liminal spaces."

Liminal spaces are fictional landscapes, often indoors, that are seemingly endless. By the medical definition, however, a liminal space is the uncertain transition between the present and the next stage of an individual's life. Beginning in 2019, the creators of fictional "liminal spaces" attached the overwhelming nature of life's transitions to photos of real, empty spaces, to create an eerie narrative that usually goes like this: you're reminding your own business when suddenly, you've become transported into a never-ending maze of empty rooms. Furthermore, several internet communi-

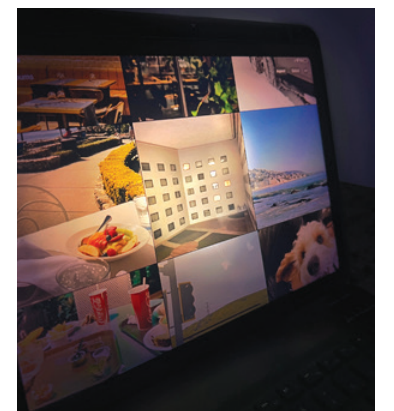
ties have collaborated on making a large collection of liminal spaces called the Backrooms. Each location, or "level," is associated with a collage of photos depicting landscapes of a certain theme.

These narratives occur in a range of mysterious settings, from abandoned offices to dark, unpopulated public spaces. As of recently, the popularity of liminal spaces has inspired the creation of stories about fictional locations, and visual art styles culminated with uncanny themes and diverse art projects.

Specifically, liminal spaces have inspired numerous visual art styles. Referred to as "internet aesthetics," these visual styles incorporate the themes of loneliness, disorientation, and nostalgia that are tied to liminal spaces. The origin of one aesthetic, "Dreamcore," reveals how the idea of being trapped in an endless maze inspired some individuals who may

feel uncertain about significant transitions in their lives to emphasize the unrealistic yet serene nature of art. "Dreamcore" can be recognized through its arrangement of pastel-colored objects or locations, exemplifying the surreal nature of dreams and liminal spaces.

Due to the popularity of these uncanny themes, art projects inspired by, or referencing to, the horror of becoming trapped in a liminal space have been created throughout the years. Often coming in the form of video series, computer games, or art exhibitions, the internet has collaborated to make a definitive world surrounding liminal spaces. One example of an art exhibition surrounding these fictional constructs is MeowWolf's Omega Mart in Las Vegas. The exhibition is designed to look like an ordinary grocery store. However, Christine Lee, a visitor of Omega Mart, noted how "as you continue



Is there anything wrong with one of the photos here? If there is, it may be hard to point out why at first.

[Source: Author, Audrey Park]

exploring, hidden doors open and lead you to bizarre rooms. The vibe is altered as the entire market turns into a labyrinth."

It's not surprising why liminal spaces became popular, considering their perplexing but exciting premise. Furthermore, creating a concrete definition for liminal spaces, an initially open-ended concept, has undoubtedly unified a wide expanse of the internet.

Editors Column

## Spike Jonze's Her, An Odyssey into Love Beyond Physical Limits



**Joshua Kim**  
Grade 12  
Ed W. Clark High School



Her leaves you pondering on life's obscure massiveness.  
[Source: Author, Joshua Kim]

Can you believe it's already December? A time when Christmas lights begin to flower the exterior of our homes and boxes of hot cocoa fill our cabinets as we prepare to relax until the end of another year. See, my favorite way of doing just that is by watching a good movie. I and many others, maybe you as well, prefer the genre of romance. While thinking of what to watch one weekend, the notes of a

song I had heard in the past melodically echoed through my mind. It was the song Photograph from the soundtrack of the movie Her. I hadn't watched the movie, but after looking it up and seeing that it was listed as romance, I naturally grabbed a blanket and prepared for a 2-hour journey.

However, describing the film as a "journey" doesn't do it justice.

Her, directed by Spike Jonze, dives into the bleak life of Theodore (Joaquin Phoenix). Theodore is a sensitive man who earns his living by writing love letters for other people. He lives an ordinary yet colorless life. With a futuristic smartphone and earpiece that is more advanced than ours, he checks his emails on his way home from work, relaxes by indulging in a holographic video game, and ends his day sleeping amongst the towering buildings of downtown Los Angeles.

Left heartbroken after his marriage ends, Theodore comes across a public advertisement for a new operating system (OS) that permeates the bleakness of AI. The OS can develop its own unique entity. So, Theodore starts the OS program and is greeted by the soft, playful voice of Samantha (Scarlett Johansson). Although they start as mere acquaintances, their relationship soon deepens into a complex tapestry of love. Theodore feels a realness in life with Samantha, and Samantha explores the largeness of life

alongside Theodore.

Her isn't the typical romance story. It's strangely, unique. However, it's soul-grippingly beautiful.

Out of the many movies I've witnessed in my life, all with a higher production budget than Her, none have had the eye-watering storyline development, breathtaking cinematography, or the self-reflection-evoking nature of Her.

No words can capture the artistry of this 2013 masterpiece. This film is decades ahead of our time. During this cozy holiday season, I invite you to indulge in the once-in-a-lifetime adventure of Her. Like me, you might come out with a larger view of life alongside a serene moment of personal introspection and the wish of an encore longing in your mind. If you aren't sold on the movie yet, let its Academy Award for Writing and The Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay speak for themselves. Her is the greatest film ever created.

Student Reporter

## An Exciting Trip to Sedona



**Hyunseo Stella Ahn**  
Grade 7  
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For this year's Thanksgiving break, my family and I visited Sedona with our church friends. It was to visit nature for a change, since everyone was behind a screen every day. The drive to the red rocks was pretty smooth; my sister and I were awestruck by the sights of nature. We saw so many different types of trees and rocks, and even saw wild horses grazing in the fields! They looked super small from a distance, but they seemed ginormous next to the trees. When we arrived at the Airbnb, the rush of warm air welcomed us into the house as we were greeted by the others who came before us. There was a giant TV on top of the mantle depicting a picture of a burning fireplace. I heard sounds coming from downstairs and quickly made my way to the basement as the warm air rushed back to my face. The laughter was contagious, and I saw all of my friends from church, as they all turned to greet me.



The beautiful landscape seen in Sedona during my family trip with church members.  
[Source: Author, Hyunseo Stella Ahn]

Most of the time, when we have road trips, my family always ends up being really tired, but this time, we were able to arrive at the Airbnb with the others happily. The moment we stepped out of our car, the first thing we saw was a bunch of red rocks and canyons. The weather was so cold, even inside the Airbnb, that the heater was on the whole time we were there.

After a restless night of hanging out together, we all decided to go on a morning hike. It was a really cold day, despite the fact that back in San Diego, the weather was still pretty warm. The red canyons were almost sparkling in the sun as we made our way through the trail. The trail was very relaxing, and everyone was content afterward. Although the bright sun was

shining in our eyes and faces, we were able to continue hiking with the help of five water bottles and three layers of sunscreen. Walking around in the peaceful quietness of nature without any electronics was really relaxing, and I felt much more refreshed afterward. The calming sounds of the birds chirping and the gentle sloshes of the river water bumping against the rocks nearby was truly a way to let go of our feelings and instead let the air flow into our body.

This year's break was definitely one of the best I've had, and it will be a very memorable moment in my life. Ever since we visited the canyons, I have felt fresh and happy. Although the weather wasn't ideal, the beautiful red rocks and our stay in Arizona really made our week special. My family is sure we are going to go to another fantastic place next year too.

Student Reporter

## The Benefits of Having A Gratitude Journal



**Erin Ryu**  
Grade 10  
Harvard-Westlake School

As we proceed through the winter months, the seasons continue to shift, bringing with them a sense of change and new beginnings. The weather is getting colder, the nights are getting darker, and the leaves are turning a beautiful blend of orange and crimson. With the arrival of December, many students look forward to one thing: Winter Break. Before we get too excited about the vacation, we should all take the time to pause and reflect on the blessings in our lives. One way to do so is to have a gratitude journal, noting down moments of happiness and thankfulness.

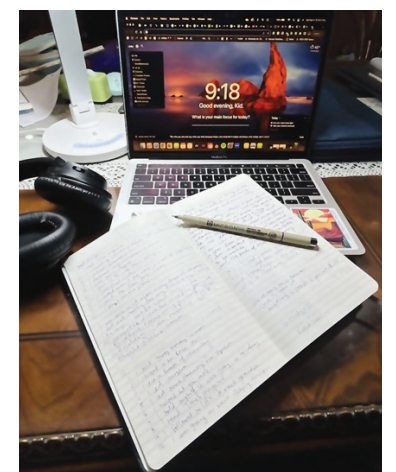
Every morning in the eighth grade, my homeroom teacher had us write down three things we were thankful for and one goal we had for the day. The typical answer was, "I'm thankful for my friends, family, and dog," and, "I hope to do well on my history test today."

While the answers were often repeated out of habit, I realized that taking one more second to think about the reasoning behind each item deepened the impact of the prompt. For example, one could be grateful for their friends for always being there in times of hardship, their family's unconditional love and support, and their faithful dog for its loyalty. By thinking about these reasons, the student's goal could have been adjusted to something a bit more emotionally beneficial, such as striving to show their appreciation and love to their friends, family, and dog.

Studies show that recalling positive past experiences can boost overall self-esteem and act as a buffer against more negative emotions. Positive retrieval, such as thinking about how you helped someone that day or vice versa, can also decrease anxiety and lower cortisol levels, helping those

who deal with negative thoughts. One way to use a gratitude journal is by unwinding before bed, which improves overall physical and mental health, minimizing bedtime stress, or, as mentioned, early in the morning to get through the day with a stronger and more positive mindset.

So, how does one start a journal? Though there are journals with pre-made prompts, a regular notebook is perfectly reasonable. There are countless ways in which someone can fill a journal. Still, some options include starting with a summary of your day, then writing ten things, however minimal, that you did to help yourself, another person, or your community. Then, you can end by writing about a fond memory, someone you value, or something that gives you joy in life, such as a good playlist or a cozy bakery down the street.



Taking the time to write in a gratitude journal is a great way to start or end one's day. [Source: Author, Erin Ryu]

As our world goes through turbulent times, taking a moment to reflect on the good things in our lives is valuable. Creating change in our community comes by reflecting and realizing the possibility of something better, but also thinking about the good is important. And that only starts with one word: gratitude.